

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 14673

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR

SUBJ: SAKHAROV'S NOBEL PRIZE AND THE DISSIDENT COMMUNITY

1. SUMMARY. AWARDING OF THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE TO ANDREI SAKHAROV PRESENTS THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES WITH HOBSON'S CHOICE. IT ALSO GREATLY HEARTENS THE OTHERWISE WEAKEND DISSIDENT MOVEMENT WITHIN THE USSR. END SUMMARY.

2. FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE MOSCOVITE DISSIDENT COMMUNITY THE AWARDING OF THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE TO SAKHAROV COMES AS AN IMMENSE ENCOURAGEMENT AT A TIME WHEN THEIR FORTUNES ARE AT A LOW EBB. THE DILEMMA WHICH THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES FACE: WHETHER OR NOT TO LET SAKHAROV LEAVE THE USSR TO RECEIVE HIS PRIZE AND
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THEN RETURN TO THE USSR, IS ONLY OF SECONDARY IMPORTANCE

TO THE DISSIDENTS (ALTHOUGH THEIR CONSENSUS IS THAT THE AUTHORITIES WILL NOT ALLOW HIM TO LEAVE WITH ANY GUARANTEE OF RETURN). MOST IMPORTANT TO THEM IS THE FACT OF THE AWARD ITSELF; THE FACT THAT SAKHAROV'S EFFORTS, AND BY EXTENSION THOSE OF THE DISSIDENCIA BEEN RECOGNIZED IN THE WEST AND IN THE MOST DRAMATIC WAY POSSIBLE. INCIDENTALLY, DISSIDENT SOURCES HAVE EXPRESSED TREMENDOUS RESPECT FOR NORWAY AS A SMALL COUNTRY WITH A COMMON BORDER WITH THE USSR WHICH NEVERTHELESS "TOOK ON" ITS NEIGHBOR ON THIS ISSUE.

3. OUR SOURCES HAVE NOT YET REACHED A BROAD CONSENSUS OF THE EFFECT THAT THE AWARDED OF THE PRIZE WILL HAVE ON THEM. MANY SIMPLY NOTE THAT THINGS CAN HARDLY GET WORSE. OTHERS SEE THE PRIZE AS ENCOURAGING THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES TO CONTINUE AND INTENSIFY AND ANTI-DISSIDENT CAMPAIGN THAT SEVERAL SOURCES PROFESS ALREADY TO SEE IN APPLICATION. ACCORDING TO THIS LINE OF REASONING, THE KREMLIN WISHES TO MAKE A CLEAR SIGNAL TO THE DISSIDENTS THAT THE CSCE AGREEMENTS ARE FOR WESTERN CONSUMPTION ONLY; THAT THERE ARE TO BE NO CHANGES WITHIN THE USSR IN THE WAY IN WHICH PEOPLE ARE TREATED. JEWISH "REFUSENIK" SOURCES TEND TO TAKE THE LINE THAT THE AWARDED OF THE PRIZE WILL HAVE NO EFFECT ON THEM IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THEY FEEL THAT IT WILL HAVE NO BEARING ON WHETHER OR NOT IN ANY GIVEN CASE THE PERMISSION TO LEAVE IS GRANTED. THEY ARE, OF COURSE, EXTREMELY PLEASED THAT THE PRIZE WAS AWARDED TO SAKHAROV BUT SEE IT AS CHANGING NOTHING.

4. THE SITUATION IS MORE COMPLICATED FOR NON-JEWISH DISSIDENTS WHO DO NOT NORMALLY ENJOY THE SIGNS OF CONTINUED VOCAL SUPPORT IN THE WEST THAT HELP TO BUOY UP THE JEWS. TO NON-JEWISH DISSIDENTS, FOR WHOM SAKHAROV IS THE MOST IMPORTANT - INDEED NEARLY THE ONLY - SYMBOL, THE PRIZE MAY MAKE A DIFFERENCE. SOME FEEL, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE TRIAL OF ANDREI TVERDOKHLEBOV, OF THE SOVIET CHAPTER OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, MAY NOW BE POSTPONED. THE DISSIDENTS ARE IMMENSELY HEARTENED NOW THAT THEIR WORK HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED. THEY THINK IT LIKELY THAT

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THERE WILL BE A RECRUDESCENCE OF ACTIVITY WITHIN THE DISSIDENT MOVEMENT AS A RESULT OF THE PRIZE HAVING GONE TO SAKHAROV. OUR SOURCES NOTE THAT THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE IN THE WORK OF THE DISSIDENTS BUT HAVE NOT BEEN PREPARED TO TAKE A DECISIVE STEP TOWARD JOINING THE MOVEMENT (FOR EXAMPLE BY SIGNING A PETITION) AT A TIME WHEN THE WHOLE DISSIDENT EFFORT WAS IN SUCH CLEAR DISARRAY. THESE PEOPLE ARE NOW EXPRESSING

INTEREST IN PLAYING A ROLE IN THE MOVEMENT.

5. NATURALLY OUR SOURCES EXPECT ANY NEW ACTIVITY TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY INCREASED REPRESSION. THEY FEEL, THOUGH, THAT THE POLICE WILL BE TOLD TO BE A GOOD DEAL MORE CAREFUL NOW AS A RESULT OF THE PUBLICITY SURROUNDING THE AWARD, AND THE CONSEQUENT PROOF THAT THERE IS A SUBSTANTIAL AND LONG-TERM WESTERN INTEREST IN THE ACTIVITIES AND FATE OF THE DISSIDENTS.

6. THE NEXT STEP WILL BE THE DECISION ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT TO LET SAKHAROV LEAVE TO ACCEPT THE PRIZE. MOST PEOPLE HERE FEEL THAT HE WILL EVENTUALLY BE TOLD THAT HE MAY GO AND COME BACK BUT THAT HE WILL NOT RECEIVE THE IRON-CLAD GUARANTEES CONCERNING HIS RETURN WITHOUT WHICH, WE UNDERSTAND, HE WILL REFUSE TO GO. IN THAT EVENT THE AUTHORITIES MAY TRY TO PORTRAY A REFUSAL TO GO AS A PERSONAL ONE. WHILE OUR SOURCES AGREE THAT THERE WOULD BE PROPAGANDA KUDOS TO BE GAINED IN THE WEST FROM ALLOWING SAKHAROV TO LEAVE, ACCEPT HIS PRIZE AND RETURN, THERE IS NEAR UNANIMITY AMONG THOSE PEOPLE TO WHOM WE HAVE TALKED THAT THIS WOULD SERVE TO IGNITE A WHOLE RASH OF INCREASED ACTIVITY BY DISSIDENTS OF ALL SORTS. SAKHAROV WOULD THUS BE SEEN AS HAVING SUCCESSFULLY CONFRONTED THE AUTHORITIES. OUR SOURCES FEEL THAT THIS IS A RISK THAT THE KREMLIN WILL NOT BE PREPARED TO TAKE.

7. SOVIET PRESS REACTION HAS BEEN, NOT SURPRISINGLY, VERY CAUTIOUS THUS FAR. THERE HAVE BEEN SMALL ITEMS IN PRAVDA AND IZVESTIYA IN WHICH THE COMMON DEVICE OF QUOTING WESTERN (COMMUNIST) NEWSPAPERS IS USED. THE
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STORIES IN THE WESTERN PAPERS REPORTEDLY DISAPPROVE OF THE AWARD, CALL IT INTERFERENCE IN SOVIET AFFAIRS, AIMED AT HOLDING BACK DETENTE AND SO ON. THERE HAS BEEN ONE COMMENTARY ON THE TASS ENGLISH WIRE (BUT NOT SO FAR AS WE KNOW ON THE RUSSIAN SERVICE), BY KURI KORNILOV IN WHICH SAKHAROV IS ACCUSED OF REPEATING ANTI-SOVIET PROPAGANDA, OF SUPPORTING THE PRESENT CHILEAN REGIME, AND AGAIN IS ACCUSED OF OPPOSING DETENTE.

8. THE DECISION ON HOW TO HANDLE THIS MATTER WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE MADE AT THE POLITBURO LEVEL. BREZHNEV AND THE TOP LEADERSHIP IN THE COMING MONTH WILL THUS HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER TO CLAMP DOWN FURTHER ON SAKHAROV AND THEREBY RISK WESTERN OPPROBRIUM IN THE AFTERMATH OF CSCE, OR TO GIVE WHAT THEY MUST

CONSIDER TO BE A SPUR TO THE DISSIDENT MOVEMENT BY
LETTING SAKHAROV RECEIVE THE PRIZE. LIKE MOST LOCAL
DISSIDENTS, OUR HUNCH IS THAT SAKHAROV WILL BE OFFERED
A ONE-WAY TICKET TO OSLO AND THAT THIS WILL NOT BE
ACCEPTABLE TO HIM.
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